# XV

## *Famine and War*

587 628 TARFA, SISTER OF Amir Fuaz, who had married Mijlem ibn Meheyd, the Chief of the Fid'an, died suddenly. Thereupon, what must the fifty-five-year-old widower do but forthwith sue for the hand of another sister of the Ruala Prince, Fuwasa, who was seventeen. Fuaz refused, and declared publicly, before the men in assembly, that he considered Ibn Meheyd too old for his young sister. Thereupon the vain Fid'an chief flew into a towering rage and swore that he would take vengeance not only on his brother-in-law, Amir Fuaz, but also on the whole Ruala tribe, and the Sha'lan family in particular. All this ultimately came to pass.

628 721 731x During the last few months, Ibn Meheyd had matured his plans for revenge. He had stirred up the neighbouring tribes of the Fid'an into joining him in war on the Ruala. It seemed as if the famine, threatened by the failure of rain in the Hamad and other grazing regions, would now become an additional formidable ally of Amir Fuaz's foes. Thirty-five thousand Ruala, with seven thousand tents and about three hundred and fifty thousand camels would be forced to invade the grazing territory of enemies, unless sufficient rain fell in the Hamad within the next few days.

000 As yet, life ran its familiar round. But over all hovered the spectres of thirst, hunger, and death.

The Ruala did not fear war. Were they not strong

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There are no special wedding ceremonies. Part of the meat from the slaughtered she-camel is distributed among the members of the bride's kin and acquaintances, the rest is served for supper in the bridegroom's tent. Nobody is invited, nobody brings any wedding presents. There is no party, no dancing; neither the girls nor women sing or shout with joy. Often even the relatives of either the bridegroom or the bride do not know that there is going to be or has been a wedding. Neither does the slaughtering of a she-camel signify anything especially important, because an old or wounded animal is killed quite frequently. The tiny round tent, *ḥeǧra*, alone shows that there has been a wedding. But if it was put up at sunset and the camp moves elsewhere next morning nobody takes notice of it, except perhaps the nearest neighbors.

The morning after the wedding night the bridegroom goes to the men's compartment, *rab'a*, of his family tent, where he is saluted with the words: "Be blessed, may good be thy portion! *lâfi 'alejk al-ḫejr*." The bride is likewise visited by the women, who greet her: "Mayest thou bring good to thy cousin!" The young bride receives a gift from her father-in-law, then leaves the *ḥeǧra* to join the other women of her husband's family in the tent, although she need not work for seven days after the wedding. Her husband attends to his work as usual, also buying her trousseau, which consists of various blankets and rugs, as, for instance, the *ṣwâf*, wool carpet, *nasije*, thin fabric rug, *siǧâde*, prayer carpet, *ḫâf*, European quilts, and of dresses and kerchiefs. The trousseau is given to the wife after, never before, the wedding night, *el'ja-'ras 'alejha*, and she is not obliged to return it.

If a widow or a divorced woman marries again, she is free from work for three days only.

When a man marries for the first time he stays with his wife for seven nights, but if he already has another wife he devotes himself to her also.

A young husband is greeted with the words: "Blessed be the tent! *mbârak al-bejt*," his answer being: "May (Allâh) bless thee still more! *bâreḳ lak bel-mubârak*." When speaking of a woman's husband the word *raǧolha*, her man, is used; of a man's wife, *mrateh* (or *ḥurmeteh*), his wife; and the husband addresses his wife as *rê'ijet bejtena*, the mistress of our tent.

The Rwala usually have only one woman in a tent, seldom

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586 who desires to be released for a compensation is called *'ajûf*.
562 All she can do is to appeal to the sympathy of her kin. She
602 calls on either her father, brother, uncle, or cousin, pleading: "I do not want him! Return what you have received from him!" But they try to evade her request with the words: "Go back! Thou surely wilt get used to him!" She, however, keeps on begging until she finally persuades one of them to help her. If she does not succeed and they all refuse to do anything for her, nothing remains for her but to elope, for should she seek protection from others against her own kin the father or brother could kill her, as she is considered to be the property of her father. He begot her, and her brother inherits her from him.

A man who divorces his wife, even if she h... stayed only one night with him, must give her a camel and a pack saddle, *ḥedâje*. Nobody has the right to take these away from the woman thus divorced, *muṭallaḳa*. Yet anything in addition, *kurum*, received from her husband his heir may demand back. The trousseau bought for her by the husband belongs to her only. In case she has young children she takes and cares for them till the age of seven; then they return to their father's tent.

• 587 In the later stages of pregnancy the divorced wife may
851 remarry at once. If her pregnancy is not yet visible, she has
691 to wait at least six months, *ichn 'edde*, and as soon as it is clear whether or not she bears the seed of her husband in her womb, she may become the wife of another. The Rwala fear quarrels and lawsuits regarding the paternity of a child born after a married couple has separated and therefore require the woman to wait. The disregard shown by the chiefs for this rule is often a cause of protracted litigation.

851 Thus, to give an instance, the chief Fahad eben Hazzâ'
584 eben Ša'lân divorced his wife, whom before long another chief, Ḥalaf âl Iḍen, took to his tent. After about a year she gave birth to a boy to whom she gave the name of Ṭrâd and who grew to maturity in the tent of his father; but when he was about to marry he quarrelled with his father and moved to another tent. This was due to the story told him by his old slave that he was not the son of Ḥalaf but of Fahad, who had in the meantime become the prince of the Rwala. To Ṭrâd Prince Fahad naturally seemed much grander than a small chief like Ḥalaf, and therefore he at once went to him,

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cannot meet the demand and her kin will not help, the lover can only elope with her. Then they seek refuge either with the Šammar between the middle Euphrates and Tigris, or with the Lhejb in the vicinity of Aleppo, or, perhaps, with the Sirḥân and Beni Ṣaḫr on the southwest border of the Ḥawrân. Once there the lovers care not in the least for either the husband's or the wife's relatives. An elopement carried through successfully dissolves the marriage as completely as a divorce itself.[1] The eloper may now make the woman of his heart his lawful wife but must not return with her to his kin before a reconciliation with her former husband and relatives is effected; otherwise he would expose both himself and her to taunts of every imaginable kind. Therefore he sends to them one messenger after another with entreaties for a reconciliation, which, however, is not easily attained. The former husband is generally obdurate much longer than the woman's kin. These accuse the husband of having himself caused the elopement by his unwillingness to let her go and also because he was unable to guard her better in the first place. They sometimes go even as far as to threaten that they will demand from him compensation for staining their honor, should he not forgive both the lover and the wife with whom he has eloped. For has she not been carried away from them as much as from him? And was he not her proper guardian and protector? The deceived husband must not kill either the eloper or the woman, for then he would furnish a reason for revenge. An elopement of a married woman is brought about by stratagem, not by force, and stratagem is not punishable with death. [684]

If a plain but healthy girl cannot find a husband, it is the duty of her nearest kinsman with whom marriage is permissible to marry her; should he refuse he would be a butt for jokes among all his kin forever. In this manner a girl of al-Wiṭre (or al-Wuṭara), subject to Ebe. Fâ'ûr of the 'Ebede tribe, was married in 1909.

## PENALTIES FOR UNCHASTITY

Whoever accuses a female, whether girl or woman, of unchastity and cannot prove it, forfeits his hand; this is cut off by a kinsman of the accused. If he puts himself in good

[1] [Errata: See p. 712, cat. 116 for correction of line 8 -- Analyst]

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and plants on cool days. 8. *Jaṣṣâṣ* is said of one who delights in quarrels and in setting people against each other by carrying gossip and distorting their words. *Zibdet al-mḍâb*, melted butter, signifies invented, false stories, or calumnies. Melted butter is liked by everybody but cannot be the exclusive food, as it would cause death from dysentery; thus it is also with false stories. Pleasant to listen to, should the hearers make them a foundation for their acts, they would not meet with success. 9. He that cannot work, but lives and thrives on the sweat and toil of others, must perish as soon as they cease to support him.

*Prudence*

1. *Al-ḥâjet bâlak tebni*
   *illa-s-sôs ḥeǧâreh kbâr*
2. *w-al-bâjeh ḥaḍrak tetwih*
   *damhât al-bauwâh kṭâr*
3. *w-al-mar'i ḥaḍrak ter'ih*
   *elja' ra'ejt er'a-n-nuâr.*

1. Beware of building a wall,
   Except when the foundation is of big stones.
2. Beware of taking an ingrate for thy companion,
   For much trouble he will cause thee.
3. Of land that has been grazed upon beware;
   If thou desirest to pasture, on blossoms pasture.

The poet was a settler from the oasis of al-Ǧowf; the reciter, Ḥmâr abu 'Awwâd.

Verse 1. As the houses in al-Ǧowf (as in all the settlements of inner Arabia) are built comparatively high, their walls must have solid foundations. During the fights in which the settlers frequently engage among themselves a weak foundation could be easily broken through by the enemy, and the wall would collapse. For this reason only big boulders are used in foundations. 2. *Al-bâjeh* is a man without a heart, *mâ beh ḳalb*, devoid of sympathy, gratitude, and even of morals. Whoever takes such a man for his companion, *ḳaṣr*, on a long trip will suffer more troubles than could be found even in hell. 3. *Al-mar'i* is either a woman divorced by her husband or a widow. Do not marry such a one; rather take a blossom, a virgin.